

THE JOURNEY

July 2011

Casa Salazar

There are many orphanages in this country, but not many we believe in as strongly as Casa Salazar. That's because this children's home is all about keeping numbers down to a manageable size, as it's not really an orphanage, but a *home*. More like a foster family than an institution. Mostly, it's because this orphanage has at its heart deep love for their children and a vision for their long-term health and wellness.



The vision for Casa Salazar has been growing in their hearts since Jose and Shari each spent time serving in more typical orphanages many years ago. Their experiences left them feeling burdened for children who learned to “perform” for visitors and who were breaking from the wounds of attachment issues, which can be reinforced and deepened with numerous entrances and exits of people in their lives. As their hearts broke for the children in their care, God began to grow in them a seed of an idea for something different.

Their mission is to provide a home for 6–8 displaced children and to live out the Scriptural idea of “adoption” by grafting these children into the very fiber of the family's composition. They provide for the physical, emotional, and spiritual care of these children all the way through adulthood. And the toughest part is that they desire to do this without putting their kids on display even though they can succeed only through the generosity of people who believe in their vision enough to support them financially without desiring an emotional or physical relationship with the kids.

After many years of wading through the paperwork and red tape of the Guatemalan government, they were approved last summer to begin receiving children. By September, Shari and Jose received a call asking if they would be willing to take in three children who had been removed from an abusive family situation. In an instant, they went from a family of three to a family of six. Not an easy task!

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Ministry Musings

Is God Big Enough?

“There are many in the world who are dying for a piece of bread, but there are many more dying for a little love.”

~Mother Teresa

“There are a thousand hacking at the branches of evil to one who is striking at the root.”

~Thoreau, Walden, 1854

One of the topics we talk about a bunch in the missionary community is the role of God in the world and our own personal journey of partnering with Him in those areas. Recently I was reminded that even when we do all we can to love and serve those that Christ called us to, we must be very careful to not unknowingly communicate that the God “they” have is not as big as the God “we” have. We can do this in the States by serving in impoverished countries with the subtle mindset that we are “bringing God” to them. We can do this by questioning the circumstances people find themselves in and helping them to “get out of it.” Americans can do this by seeing the plight of people crossing a border and partnering with them because we feel they must escape, because God isn’t available “there”... only in America.

We do it here in the field all the time without trying to do it. We do it because the ideas of freedom and a better and more comfortable life are so ingrained in us, it flows through us as a paradigm to serve. We feel sorry for people, and we want to help. We feel led by God to give and serve, and feed, and teach, and touch and heal. *And God calls us to do this.* So we walk believing that we can and must exhibit the love and attitude of Christ in a local community. These are as pure as motives that one can have when serving others.

And, yet we can still get it wrong...or just not exactly right. Because we are human, and because Satan is really good at what he does.

When I read scripture I also see God loving and noticing Hagar as she is escaping an abusive slave relationship with Abraham and Sarah, and then, telling her to go back and submit to Sarah’s ownership because He is big enough *in* the circumstance. I see a God who never counsels Leah to leave a philandering husband who despises her. Instead He shows Himself *inside* the mess and she becomes the mother of Judah, and the very matriarch of the line of Christ. I see Joseph, who always interpreted his circumstances, (even when thrown in prison) as God working out His perfect plan for His people. In the New Testament I see Jesus NOT rescuing his cousin John the Baptist, and saving him from an awful beheading, but instead simply communicating that He was God, and that He was big enough.

This is hard to understand and practice. I think it may be impossible to get it right. But I also wonder if the worse thing people will say about the church someday will be, not that we didn’t give or serve enough, but that we somehow communicated that God wasn’t big enough to **be** enough for whatever people face in life.

I pray He will be big enough for me.

(Don)

Family Life

* Several months ago, we asked for your prayers that God would give us clarity about where to serve next. That doesn't necessarily mean that we are leaving Guatemala, but it does mean that we are keeping our hearts and minds open for His movement in our lives. Since that newsletter, a few paths have closed, but several remain open. Please continue to pray with us and for us.

* Also be praying for our relationships with the other missionaries in the church as well as our Guatemalan friends and neighbors. We feel a very strong connection to the people here, and we want to continue to point towards Him and live in a way that honors those friendships. Pray for us to be sacrificial in the ways we love the people around us.



Our Precious Althea and Aidan

These two munchkins have hit a lot of milestones this year! They turned 7 last month and finished 1st grade. They've both lost teeth, learned to ride bikes without training wheels, and mastered many skills in school.

Ali has really taken an interest in reading, cooking, and doing acts of kindness for her family and friends. She continues to be sensitive and gentle-hearted, often

thinking of other people who are hurting or in need.

Aidan is a happy, spunky little guy. He is very quick to apply new math concepts to his everyday activities, and he has quite an ear for playing piano. He is also eager to have meaningful ways to help the family such as washing the dishes or sweeping the floor.

Our Little Olivia

Every single day is an adventure with Olivia. She has a spirit of determination (a.k.a stubbornness) unlike any child I've given birth to or babysat. She is fiercely independent, frustratingly opinionated, and endearingly humorous...all in the span of two minutes. She is quickly learning a sophisticated vocabulary, including words like "burp" and "toot". Oh, the influence of her two older siblings! Along with picking up several English words each day, she is bravely tackling Spanish *and* K'iche. Her body and her ability to run, dance, jump (almost), and twirl fascinates her. She has even adopted some Guatemalan habits, namely preferring rice and beans over pasta or milk. Though often challenging to care for, she is also an unbelievable treasure!



At first, the arrangement was temporary and it was uncertain if or when the children would be returned to their birth mother (which, in this case, would have been dangerous and extremely detrimental to the kids). Fears were calmed and prayers answered when, in May, the judge mandated that the kids be permanently placed in the care of Shari and Jose. They *know* their children individually and they *love* them with all the love that good biological parents have for their own offspring.

Here's the thing. We *know* Shari and Jose and we *love* them dearly. We also know that we have been blessed with an amazing network of extremely generous supporters. A few months ago, God began to place on our hearts that we needed to ask *you* to join Him in helping Casa Salazar. Not only do they need more monthly support to care for their brood that doubled in a moment's time, but they also need considerable help with project funds to add on to their house so that they will be ready when He calls on them to expand their family once again.

Our prayer is that if you know *us* and love *us*, then your hearts will be stirred to partner with this amazing couple. Not because it makes you feel better, although you probably will. Not because you want to build a relationship with these treasured children (because you can't). But because you believe that the vision of Casa Salazar brings glory to our Father and is worth the investment.

If you want to read more about Casa Salazar straight from Shari and Jose, please find them on the internet at this address www.missionsfrontier.org/casasalazar. Even more importantly, if you can offer them a financial gift, please use the link at the bottom of that internet page to send donations directly to them. We believe that our God is big enough to take care of them *and* us, and that He will do it by using people like *you*.

Keeping in Touch

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